

## It's Time for Play! Outdoor Play

[Music]

Children: It's time for play!

Marley Jarvis: Hi, my name is Marley, and today we're going to talk about outdoor play. So, there are a lot of great benefits from playing outside. Research shows that children who play outdoors regularly are happier, healthier, and stronger. Play, especially active outdoor play in natural environments, has enormous impacts on health, everything from your fine and gross motor skills to physical exercise, to wide ranging mental health benefits, including reduced levels of anxiety and even depression. And it's really fun for them too, which then has even more benefits. For example, researchers have found that young children are more likely to engage in the kinds of vigorous physical play that strengthens their hearts, lungs, and muscles in outdoor play because they tend to play harder and for longer periods of time outside. Another example that might come as a relief to tired parents is that evidence suggests that spending time outdoors positively affects some children's sleeping patterns.

So, you don't have to have access to a whole forest or a park to enjoy outdoor play. If you have limited access to a safe place to play outside, get creative. You might need to think about using sidewalks, deck spaces, or other hard places. And this can be a great place to have kids play with wheeled toys so they can pull things along but still be outside and still be able to hear that bird or have the sun on their skin and get some of these benefits. Maybe you've got some various natural materials in the yard or in your driveway or something like that that you can bring inside. And then, kids can carefully observe them in a safe place. Or you can bring them to your deck or other kind of safe outdoor space. You also might consider putting buckets or other containers outside when it rains or snows. So, even if it's not pleasant to play outside, you can still kind of bring that in and then see how much was collected. OK, so another idea I really like is to take kind of a slow walk. But for young children, these are new and exciting things to explore, so we can join them sometimes, which has some benefits for adults as well. So, take a very slow walk and let the kids run the show. So, maybe they stop and look at this leaf for a long time. And hey, the underside of it might have some interesting hairs or spikes on it or a bug that you never saw before. So, you can search for ants in the front lawn. You can observe carefully the wood chips next to the parking lot. Whenever kids maybe find interesting. Let them lead.

Kids are naturally exploring the world and learning about the world around them through their curiosity, and this is at the core of steam. And the outdoors is a really wonderful place to be working on this. Remember that a lot of very young children are going to explore with their mouths as well, So, we need to make sure it's safe, but as long as it's safe, there's really no wrong way to play. And to extend the fun, you might think about allowing kids to make collections of things outdoors that are safe or that they've shown particular interest in, even things like a boring rock out of your driveway. When you're actually looking closely, there's like

little crystals in it and interesting lines, and kids might find this fascinating. So, you can collect things from outside and bring them back in for your art projects or try to stack natural materials inside, whatever that might be. And they might also want to create visual stories from memories. All of these things are a really great way to extend the fun from these outdoor adventures.

Lastly, remember that play isn't just good for kids. It's good for you too. Adults benefit from play as well, so you might share a favorite game from your childhood with children in your care – anything that gets you playing as well. Research shows that play provides many of the same benefits to adults as it does to children – things like boosting creativity, building relationships, and supporting physical and mental health. We all need time to play, and I hope you too will be able to enjoy the outdoors as you make time for play.

Bye!

[Music]